

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

March 29, 2007

1:30 p.m., MST

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Hearing Room 1 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m., MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman

Mr. Jim DiCello

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan

Ms. Johanna Haver

Ms. Eileen Klein

Ms. Karen Merritt

Absent:

Dr. John Baracy

Dr. Eugene Garcia

Ms. Anna Rosas

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Presentation and Discussion of the Development of English Language Learner Models' Components

Mr. Alan Maguire reviewed the activities of the last Task Force meeting and stated that the analysis of the survey (agenda item 3) would be rescheduled to allow more time for the analysts to prepare a comprehensive review of the survey data. He welcomed back Mr. Kevin Clark from Clark Consulting and Training, Inc., and requested Mr. Clark to facilitate the discussion on the definition of English Language Development (ELD) and the components of an ELL model.

Mr. Clark stated that the most important task of the meeting was to define ELD and what it means to teach English. Once a uniform understanding is established, the Task Force can proceed into the discussion of the two remaining components, Structure and Classroom Practices, of the ELL Program Model. Before beginning the discussion on English Language Development, he reviewed changes made to the documents previously presented (Attachment A), including the addition of the phrase "in order to meet academic standards" to the second principle in the "Role of School vis-à-vis ELL Students" quadrant of the *Principles Underlying the Arizona Law* document. Also, in the same document, the words "optimizes" and "maximizes" were changed to "facilitates." On the *English Language Classroom* diagram on

page five of the *Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice* handout, the arrows were altered to show the pathway for ELL students to move from a Structured English Immersion classroom to a English language mainstream classroom upon achieving English proficiency as measured by the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA).

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan asked if cost-effectiveness needed to be listed as one of the four main items requested in the statute. Mr. Maguire replied that he considered cost-effectiveness to be a standard that the model must be measured against, rather than a component of the model. Ms. Karen Merritt asked that a mention of organization be added under the “Teaching” quadrant in the Draft Principles document to reflect the separate grouping of ELL students and mainstream English proficient students. Ms. Garcia Dugan responded that the idea of organization was already reflected in the first principle under the “Learning” category where language-based groupings are mentioned. Mr. Maguire stated that organization was clearly reflected in the principles and not necessarily a separate item. Mr. Clark responded that the concept of language grouping is defined in Arizona statute through the definition of the English language classroom and through statutory language that requires language proficiency-based groupings for English language learners.

Mr. Clark directed Task Force members to page five, *Policy-At-A-Glance, English Language Classroom* of the *Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice* handout. In reviewing the March 14th discussion about the two types of English language classrooms, he referenced the *ELL Program Surveys February 2007 Summary* binder distributed to the Task Force at the last meeting (Attachment B). Mr. Clark, citing from the survey report, stated that 48 out of the 88 responding schools reported that they placed all ELL students in the same classes with proficient/native English speakers with, at least, a provisionally-endorsed SEI teacher teaching the class, and labeling the class a SEI classroom. He shared a direct quote, “All ELL students are mainstreamed into SEI classes.” Therefore, the survey data reflects that proficient/native English speakers are in the same classroom as ELL students who have not reached proficiency as measured by AZELLA.

Mr. Clark stated that the use of the word “transfer” in statute indicates separate classrooms for proficient/native English speakers and for students who are not English proficient. Non-English proficient students are to receive intense English language instruction, and once they have achieved proficiency as measured by AZELLA, these students are transferred to the mainstream classrooms with proficient/native English-speaking students. Furthermore, the time an ELL student spends in a SEI classroom is “not normally to exceed one year.” Ms. Merritt recommended that adding the verbiage about the one year and the four hour ELD time period would be helpful to include on the *English Language Classroom* diagram, so that ELL practitioners could see everything encapsulated in one diagram. Mr. Maguire commented that the one year cited in statute is a goal, and that the law stipulates funding for a maximum of two years. Ms. Garcia Dugan stressed that statute requires a minimum of four hours of ELD instruction, and that a school could teach six hours of ELD if the school determined that a student would progress better with the two additional hours of instruction.

Mr. Maguire stated that the wording in statute seems to indicate that ELL students are separated from proficient/native English speakers is not confined to ELD classes, but to all classes since the law does not specify classroom designations for each content area, but simply mentions the transferring to mainstream classrooms once a student becomes English proficient. Ms. Merritt said she believed the law was only targeting language arts classes. Mr. Clark said it did not specifically state language arts or science or any other subject. Therefore, the statute encompasses all content areas. He further clarified that if a classroom has a student who has not achieved English proficiency, the student must be in an SEI classroom. Ms. Johanna Haver commented that there was a big difference between a pre-emergent ELL student and an intermediate ELL student. She expressed concerns about separating intermediate ELL students from native English students at all times, stating that intermediate ELL students would be ready for some interaction with native speakers in furthering the development of their language skills.

Mr. Maguire said as long as teachers follow the ELL standards, ELD instruction could be differentiated to the level of proficiency of each student. Ms. Merritt said that strategies of instruction would differ between a large ELL population where students could be grouped by proficiency and a very small ELL population where multiple grades might be clustered. Cost efficiency would also have a bearing on ELL grouping. Ms. Haver agreed that the cost per student might be different depending on the grouping and the size of the ELL population. Mr. Maguire said that the cost per student would depend on the groupings for each school.

Ms. Merritt said that, with a rereading of the law, she did not see the law as isolating ELLs for the entire day, but interpreted it as referring only to language arts instruction. She stated that an SEI P.E. class, for example, would not be cost efficient in many schools. Mr. Maguire stated that the Task Force would determine the how to apply the statute. He recommended that the members first focus on the four hours of ELD instruction, and suggested that, once the SEI model(s) have been developed, the Task Force might formulate recommendations for the Arizona State Legislature. Ms. Garcia Dugan added that the law had been written to allow guidance from ADE and the Legislature. Federal stipulations, including the creation of an assessment closely aligned to the standards, had been made to guide instructional practices. Ms. Eileen Klein stated that the Task Force should focus on instruction in the SEI classroom, and her sense of the law was that it was to ensure the English proficiency of the student in any class. Mr. Maguire agreed. He added that students must first become proficient in English so that they can best benefit from English instruction in all subjects.

Mr. Clark referred members to *What is ELD? What does it mean to “teach” a language?* on page 8 of the ***Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice*** handout. He reviewed the pentagram’s five ELD components: phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics. Mr. Clark stated that when ELD is defined within these five areas and the level of proficiency for each component is established, the definition immediately can be made operational. Teachers need to be using this comprehensive definition of ELD in the ELD classes to provide the tools for students to succeed in other areas of academic content such as math and science. Ms. Garcia Dugan asked if these elements are being taught in elementary

schools. Mr. Clark stated that, in his experience working with schools in California, he has not seen these elements being taught. Ms. Garcia Dugan said she was comfortable with defining ELD as these five components because she said teachers should be teaching these components. Ms. Merritt said there were good computer programs to teach phonology, and that again, interaction with native speakers was also helpful. She hoped recommendations on these kinds of programs could be built into the models.

Mr. Clark suggested that the Task Force members consider which instructional objectives are being followed -- an ELL language standard or an academic content standard at any given time? He said, "Follow the master (the instructional objective)." Which dictates instruction in the classroom? In a classroom that has both ELL students and non-ELL students, the instructional objective cannot be easily differentiated. If ELD is defined as the five components in the ELD diagram, then these components align to the ELL standards and determine the discrete English skills. From the five ELD components that are embedded in the ELL standards, instruction progresses sequentially through the standards and move the student toward English proficiency.

Mr. Clark discussed the diagram on page eight showing the progress of ELL students from pre-emergent to proficient and the changing emphasis on ELD and academic English content. The more proficient a student is in English, the more language arts content he or she can handle. The content component is where SIOP would work well because it modifies the content, based on students' language skills. Mr. Clark referenced page 9 of the *Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice* handout to the preview of classes in a secondary school setting, illustrating the four hours of ELD. For a pre-emergent student, the focus would be conversational English and Academic Vocabulary, English reading, English writing, and English grammar.

Ms. Klein asked for a rereading of the passage in A.R.S. 17-752 that pertains to grouping. That passage states:

Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once English learners have acquired a good working knowledge of English and are able to do regular school work in English, they shall no longer be classified as English learners and shall be transferred to English language mainstream classrooms.

Ms. Klein's interpretation was that this only pertained to the four hours of ELD and that the law was silent on other subjects. Mr. Clark suggested that the four hours of ELD was mentioned after this grouping statement, so therefore the grouping pertained to all subjects. Mr. Maguire said he believed the law was clear that there shall be four hours of ELD, and that a mainstream English classroom contains only proficient English speakers. He stated that taking into consideration both parts of the passage, it follows that English learners are grouped together until they become proficient and transfer to mainstream classrooms. Ms. Garcia Dugan said when the law was written the focus was on the English instruction in an ELL grouping and that schools were waiting for guidance from ADE on other areas of instruction.

Mr. Jim DiCello said that if the Task Force decides on the stricter interpretation, then the electives also would be SEI. Mr. Clark replied that based on a pedagogical perspective, if one follows the principle that language-based groupings are valid for a language arts class, the same also would be true for a math class. Although this isn't in the law, it follows. He reiterated that this is normally only a one year period. Ms. Merritt brought up the concern that for students to acquire the necessary credits for graduation, SEI math and science credits would need to be counted toward graduation. Ms. Garcia Dugan agreed that these classes should count as math and science credits, that although different strategies are used, the content is the same. Ms. Merritt suggested making the grouping for non-ELD classes optional in the models, since it can depend on the background knowledge of the student whether a sheltered math class or a mainstream math class might be better for the student. Ms. Klein asked for clarification on the focus of content area SEI classes. Mr. Maguire replied that the main difference between an SEI content area class and non-SEI is the type of strategies used, but that the standards are the same, whether they are, for example, math standards or science standards.

Mr. Maguire concluded that the Task Force was clear on the grouping during the four hours of ELD, and that their focus should be on this area. The Task Force can later discuss the other hours of instruction and grouping options, which might depend on population size and other factors.

Building on the concept that as students become more proficient they can handle more content, Mr. Clark continued to the bottom of the diagram *General Relationship Between English Language Development (ELD) and Academic Content*, page 8 of the **Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice** handout. Next, he discussed *Sample SEI Program Structures for Grades 6-12*, on p. 9 of the **Arizona English Language Learners Task Force, From Policy To Practice** handout. He proposed periods one and two are English Language Arts, which would follow the content of the grade-level language arts class, combined with an academic English reading class and an English writing and grammar class. Mr. Clark suggested getting data from schools and testing out how the model groupings would look in that school, how the groupings would work out, and whether they would be workable.

Ms. Merritt asked if the "one year" indicated in the revised statute would be the first year a student was classified as ELL, or their first year at a particular school. Ms. Garcia Dugan replied it was meant to be the first year in the program and that if students change schools, they will still be in year one of the program wherever they are, and that once that year is over, it will be year two, regardless of the school they attend. Mr. Maguire added that it is not the level of proficiency when students enter the program, but the time they enter the program that is the factor. If there were a pre-emergent who made no progress in his or her first year, in the second year in the program the student would still be classified as pre-emergent, but would be considered in year two of the program. After two years the funding would run out for that student, but if he or she had not passed AZELLA the student would still be considered ELL.

3. Presentation and Discussion of the ELL Program Survey – February 2007

This item was moved to the next Task Force meeting.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Activities

Mr. Alan Maguire reviewed upcoming tasks which will address how to move from the ELL standards to classroom practices. The Task Force will look at groupings and what is done with groupings. The Task Force will also go over the survey data from the ELL surveys sent out to schools.

5. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made a call to the public at 3:40 p.m. No public testimony was given.

6. Discussion of future meetings

The next Task Force meetings are April 12 and April 26.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman
May 24, 2007